

# Henry Bouquet and Pennsylvania



*From an original painting attributed to John Wollaston  
Courtesy of Mrs. George A. Robbins.*

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of Pennsylvania on January 15, 1765, took time off from its quarrels with Governor and Proprietary, and forgot its usual distrust for things military, to vote an unanimous expression of grateful appreciation to a professional soldier, Henry Bouquet. They declared that his services in the French and Indian War and the Pontiac War, defeating the enemy, rescuing prisoners from Indian captivity, and preparing the way for peace, deserved "the grateful Tribute of Thanks from all good Men."

That Henry Bouquet had become a military hero to Pennsylvanians is one of history's ironies. This Swiss soldier of fortune, upon his first arrival in Philadelphia in 1756, had written, "I detest this cursed city," and had declared that Pennsylvanians were "the most detestable creatures ever produced by Nature, even the more odious for all that Corruption can add." His angry first impression of a weak government and insolent people is easy to explain, for a farmer had lashed at him with a whip as he rode into the city. This was the third such incident in which the common people of the Quaker province showed their active dislike and disrespect for anything associated with war, which many of them had crossed the ocean to avoid. Nothing in the background of this Swiss soldier equipped him to understand such unheard-of conduct. But he did learn to get along with Pennsylvanians. Of all the British commanders

who served in America in colonial days, none seems to have made a better impression upon his contemporaries nor to have gained greater esteem than did Henry Bouquet, who became a British subject only by naturalization in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Henry Bouquet was born in 1719 to a respected and long-established family of Rolle in the Pays de Vaud, Switzerland. His grandfather Pierre Bouquet was a town official of Rolle, and proprietor and host of the Hotel de la Tete Noire, a hostelry which had belonged to the Bouquet family for a long time. Innkeepers had a respected position in Swiss towns, and the Bouquets were linked by marriage with the leading families of the region. When Henry was born to Isaac and Madeleine Rolaz Bouquet, it was not to a humble family, but to one of aristocratic connections. His mother was of the same noble family as the mother of Albert Gallatin, another Swiss who became famous in Pennsylvania.

Like many a Swiss youth in his day, he early began a military career, enlisting at the age of seventeen in one of the professional regiments which were hired by various European powers. Thus he served the Dutch Republic and later the King of Sardinia, under whom he won distinction

as first lieutenant and adjutant during the War of the Austrian Succession. The interesting letters which Bouquet wrote about his campaigns came to the attention of the Prince of Orange, head of the Dutch Republic, and led him to engage the young officer in his Swiss Guards as captain commanding with the rank of lieutenant colonel. At the Hague, the Dutch capital, Bouquet utilized his free time for a thorough study of military science, mathematics, and other branches of learning. His circle of intimate friends included the famous philologist Tiberius Hemsterhuis and the noted naturalist and physicist Jean Allamand. The cultured atmosphere of eighteenth-century Holland prepared him to find a congenial place in the intellectual and social life of the Philadelphia of Benjamin Franklin, William Smith, John Bartram, the Willings, and the Allens.

A scheme for the organization of a Royal American Regiment to fight in the French and Indian War brought Henry Bouquet to America. In 1753 and 1754 the French had occupied western Pennsylvania, and in 1755 they had defeated the British army of General Edward Braddock in its attempt to drive them out. The British government took steps to increase its forces in America and especially to make effective use of manpower in the middle colonies. Accordingly, they planned to engage trained officers in Europe who would recruit and command German-speaking soldiers in the colonies. Among the officers thus engaged were Henry Bouquet and his friend Frederick Haldimand, who—it is said—were among the first to be considered. They had hesitated, but were persuaded to accept commissions as lieutenant colonels, each to command a battalion of the new regiment.

Bouquet came to America in the spring of 1756 and had much success in recruiting men among the German settlers of Pennsylvania and Maryland, so that the Royal American Regiment became in large part a Pennsylvania German regiment. When he marched into Philadelphia on December 10, 1756, with 547 men and officers to be quartered there, he had much difficulty in finding shelter for them, and he longed for the arrival of a superior officer to relieve him "of political matters and of any business with the civil authorities." But he was to find that the problems were not insurmountable, and he must have handled matters much more tactfully than his irate letters would suggest, for good relations were maintained between the military and civil authorities.

In 1757 Colonel Bouquet was sent with a Royal

American detachment to Charleston, South Carolina, where he strengthened and improved the defenses of the southern colony. In 1758, however, he was recalled to Pennsylvania. The plans of William Pitt and the British government had begun to take shape for an expedition to capture French Fort Duquesne at the forks of the Ohio, the site of modern Pittsburgh. The Swiss military expert was made second in command under Brigadier General John Forbes in this campaign to drive the French from western Pennsylvania and the Ohio country.

General Forbes, however, was a sick man, suffering from a fatal illness which was to end his life a few months after his victorious campaign. Most of the actual supervision and attention to details in organizing and carrying on the campaign devolved on Bouquet, and no small part of its success was due to his executive ability, his care in training the men, and his patient but firm handling of the supply services. With inexperienced provincial officers and soldiers unaccustomed to military regulations, with teamsters and farmers resentful of any effort to make them help the government even in their own defense, he yet managed to form and supply an effective striking force. Through a wilderness crossed only by Indian paths, Bouquet directed the building of the great Forbes Road over the Allegheny Mountains. Along this line of communications from Carlisle to the Ohio, he supervised the construction of a chain of forts. There were temporary alarms and setbacks. On September 14, 1758, a detachment under Major James Grant, which had been sent to reconnoiter near Fort Duquesne, was drawn into battle and disastrously defeated; and on October 12 the French attacked Fort Ligonier, but were driven off after two hours of fighting. Careful preparations, nevertheless, built up a British force so overwhelming that when it made a final dash toward Fort Duquesne, the French abandoned and burned their stronghold. British advance troops occupied the ruined fort on November 24, 1758; and, two days later, General Forbes renamed it Pittsburgh in honor of the great British statesman.

After the successful campaign, Colonel Bouquet had the problem of digging in, fortifying, bringing supplies, and expanding the foothold on the Ohio country. In the summer of 1759 the French abandoned their forts in northwestern Pennsylvania, and in July, 1760, Bouquet led an army of five hundred men northward to build new British forts at Presque Isle (now Erie) and Le Boeuf (now



*Plan of the Battle near Bushy Run, by Thomas Hutchins. The hollow oval (7) represents the "Flourbag fort" where the wounded were protected; the other ovals (5, 6) were the cattle and horses; and the rectangles mark the positions of the troops. X marks the spot from which the Indians attacked.*

Waterford), while a smaller detachment under Major Robert Stewart built Fort Venango at present Franklin. Bouquet returned to Fort Pitt in November, with his reputation enhanced by this successful expedition.

The defeat of France did not end Britain's problems in America. Since the conquest of Canada and the Ohio country, the Indians had been growing more and more restive. In the spring of 1763 they broke the peace and attacked all the posts in the western country in what was called the Pontiac War, from the name of the Ottawa chief who besieged Detroit. Fort Pitt, Fort Niagara, and Detroit held out, but all the smaller posts between them were wiped out by the end of June. Fort Pitt was cut off from communication with the East, even though the posts along the Forbes Road held fast. Even around Carlisle, settlers were attacked by prowling bands of Indians.

As higher ranking officers had been withdrawn from Pennsylvania after 1761, Sir Jeffery Amherst, the British commander in chief, ordered Colonel Bouquet to gather all available British and provincial troops and go to the rescue of Fort Pitt. Bouquet set out from Carlisle in July with a force of some nine hundred men and hastened along the Forbes Road, encumbered by many packhorses carrying supplies. Near Bushy Run, a few miles north of present Jeannette, Westmoreland County,

this little army was attacked and surrounded by a much larger force of Indians on August 5 and 6.

In a two-day battle Bouquet showed his superior understanding of the methods of wilderness warfare. His letters reporting the battle have a strong hint that he realized the similarity between his situation and what Julius Caesar often faced with the Gauls, eighteen centuries earlier. On the second day of the battle, he pretended to have his men retreat, thus leading the Indians to break cover, and thereby inflicted a severe defeat. His phrases describing this action seem to echo the great Roman soldier:

The Barbarians mistaking these motions for a retreat hurried headlong on, and Advancing upon us with the most Daring Intrepidity galled us Excessively with their heavy Fire; but at the very moment that certain of Success they thought themselves Masters of the Camp, Major Campbell at the head of the two first Companies Sallied out from a part of the Hill they could not observe and fell upon their right Flank, they resolutely return'd the fire, but could not stand the Irresistible Shock of our men, who rushing in among them Killed Many of them, and put the rest to Flight . . .

The victory at Bushy Run effectively raised the siege of Fort Pitt and gave the first check to the

Indian uprising. Letters of congratulation poured in upon Bouquet, while he waited to see if the Indians would accept the consequences of defeat and make peace. Meanwhile, he gathered supplies and enlisted more men, and he had an additional redoubt or blockhouse built at Fort Pitt. This structure, still known by his name, is today the only surviving building of that great fort and the focus of the new Point Park in Pittsburgh.

On October 3, 1764, Colonel Henry Bouquet set out on the last important campaign of his career, to invade the home villages of the Indians along the Muskingum River in Ohio. His large force was made up of British regulars and American frontiersmen, many of the latter having been willing to volunteer and serve without pay on this expedition to crush the Indian menace in its very home. This shows how well Bouquet had learned to manage the independent folk of the back country. The army marched across country with a carefully planned line of march and with thorough precautions against surprise attacks, and its movement was swift and unimpeded. The troops encamped near the forks of the Muskingum and Tuscarawas rivers and awaited the Indian reaction to their presence. This was not long in coming. On October 17 Shawnee, Delaware, and Seneca delegates arrived to sue for peace, for which Bouquet insisted on one mandatory requirement before any discussions could be opened: they must deliver up all their white prisoners. His stern attitude brought results. Hundreds of captives—men, women, and children—were brought in to the new camp he established farther down the Muskingum. Then the Colonel became more friendly and told the Indians to send representatives to Sir William Johnson, the Indian superintendent, who had authority to make a final peace. Taking hostages as a guarantee of the Indians' good behavior, he returned to Fort Pitt.

In a month and a half, by a show of force and by hard-headed bargaining, the redoubtable Swiss soldier had finally reaped the results of his victory at Bushy Run. In this campaign without a battle, he gained more fame than in all his earlier campaigns and so captured the imagination of his

contemporaries. Within less than a year his Muskingum campaign reached the pages of history, for William Smith, Provost of the College of Philadelphia, published his *Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians* in Philadelphia in 1765. The man who had once detested Pennsylvanians had become a Pennsylvania hero, winning the thanks of the Assembly. And he could now reply gracefully to the members that nothing, aside from the approbation of the King and his superiors, could give him greater "Pleasure than your favourable Opinion."

About the middle of April, 1765, news of his promotion to the rank of brigadier general arrived from London. The rule that no foreign-born person might attain such rank had been relaxed in his favor. But promotion carried with it new responsibilities. Garrisons in Florida, now within his area of command, required regulation and reorganization. He arrived there in August, caught yellow fever, and died at Pensacola on September 2, 1765, bringing his brilliant career to an untimely end.

Henry Bouquet was one of the major military figures of colonial American history, and the first important professional soldier in Pennsylvania history. His campaigns and his victory at Bushy Run were determining events in the historical development of the Ohio Valley. Had Bouquet not broken the Indian power at Bushy Run and on the Muskingum, the settlement of western Pennsylvania would have been delayed for many years, and the American patriots of Revolutionary days would have had no foothold beyond the mountains from which to establish a claim to the western territories. Such great things depended upon the energies and abilities of this Swiss soldier in the employ of Britain. With his brilliant generalship was combined a calm and competent steadiness in the administration of all the details which pertain to the functioning of an army. His unruffled demeanor in the face of reverses, his dignity and aristocratic bearing, awakened in the minds of the men who served under him a respect and loyalty like that shown to George Washington in later days.